

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to religious expression in public
 3 schools; amending s. 1002.02, F.S.; prohibiting
 4 penalty or reward for a student's religious expression
 5 in coursework, artwork, or other specified
 6 assignments; authorizing a student to wear jewelry
 7 displaying religious messages or symbols; authorizing
 8 a student to organize prayer groups, religious clubs,
 9 and other religious gatherings; requiring that a
 10 school district provide religious groups with equal
 11 access to school facilities; authorizing religious
 12 groups to advertise or announce meetings in the same
 13 manner and to the same extent as secular groups;
 14 authorizing the rights established to be enforced
 15 pursuant to the attorney's fees and costs authorized
 16 under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1998;
 17 amending s. 1002.205, F.S.; prohibiting a school
 18 district from preventing school personnel from
 19 participating in voluntary, student-initiated
 20 religious activities on school grounds under specified
 21 circumstances; providing an effective date.

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 23 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
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25 Section 1. Subsection (25) is added to section 1002.20,

26 Florida Statutes, to read:

27 1002.20 K-12 student and parent rights.—Parents of public
28 school students must receive accurate and timely information
29 regarding their child's academic progress and must be informed
30 of ways they can help their child to succeed in school. K-12
31 students and their parents are afforded numerous statutory
32 rights including, but not limited to, the following:

33 (25) RELIGIOUS LIBERTIES. —

34 (a) Religious expression. -- A student may express his or
35 her religious beliefs in coursework, artwork, and other written
36 and oral assignments free from discrimination. A student's
37 homework and classroom assignments shall be evaluated,
38 regardless of their religious content, based on expected
39 academic standards relating to the course curriculum and
40 requirements. A student may not be penalized or rewarded based
41 on the religious content of his or her work if the coursework,
42 artwork, or other written or oral assignments require a
43 student's viewpoint to be expressed.

44 (b) Religious jewelry. -- A student may wear jewelry that
45 displays a religious message or symbol in the same manner and to
46 the same extent that secular types of jewelry that displays
47 messages or symbols are permitted to be worn.

48 (c) Religious organization. -- A student may organize
49 prayer groups, religious clubs, and other religious gatherings
50 before, during, and after the school day in the same manner and

51 to the same extent that a student is permitted to organize
 52 secular activities and groups. A religious group may be given
 53 access to the same school facilities for assembling as given to
 54 secular groups without discrimination based on the religious
 55 content of the group's expression. A group that meets for prayer
 56 or other religious speech may advertise or announce its meetings
 57 in the same manner and to the same extent that a secular group
 58 may advertise or announce its meetings.

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 60 The rights provided by this subsection may be enforced pursuant
 61 to s. 761.04.

62 Section 2. Section 1002.205, Florida Statutes, is amended
 63 to read:

64 1002.205 Guidelines on religious expression;
 65 distribution.—The Department of Education shall each year
 66 distribute for informational purposes to all district school
 67 board members, district school superintendents, school
 68 principals, and teachers the entire guidelines on "Religious
 69 Expression in Public Schools" published by the United States
 70 Department of Education, as updated from time to time. In
 71 addition, a school district may not prevent school personnel
 72 from participating in religious activities on school grounds
 73 that are initiated by students at reasonable times before or
 74 after the school day if such activities are voluntary and do not
 75 conflict with the responsibilities or assignments of such

76 | personnel. The rights provided under this section may be
77 | enforced pursuant to s. 761.04.

78 | Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2017.